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Reviews of recent publications

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Esperança Bielsa, *The Latin American Urban Crónica: Between Literature and Mass Culture* by Miguel González-Abellás, Gene H. Bell-Villada, *Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: A Casebook*, Miguel González-Abellás, Albert Memmi, *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Robert Bononno, Christa Jones, Erin Graff Zivin, *The Wandering Signifier: Rhetoric of Jewishness in the Latin American Imaginary*, Naomi Lindstrom, Dawn Fulton, *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism*, Jane E. Evans, Anne Lambright, *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual: Subject Space and the Feminine in the Narrative of José María Arguedas*, Arturo Arias, Andrew Sobanet, *Jail Sentences: Representing Prison in Twentieth-Century French Fiction*, Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch, Olga López-Valero Colbert, *The Gaze on the Past: Popular Culture and History in Antonio Muñoz Molina's Novels*, Jorge Pérez, Warren Motte, *Fiction Now: The French Novel in the Twenty-First Century*, Martine Fernandes, Hélène Cixous, *Hyperdream*, Beverley Bie Brahic, Amy Baram Reid, Jean-Michel Rabaté, *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*, Safoi Babana-Hampton

Book Reviews

Esperança Bielsa. *The Latin American Urban Crónica: Between Literature and Mass Culture*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2006. xv + 238 pp.

This book offers a study of the contemporary *crónica* written in Mexico City and Guayaquil, focusing on the liminality of the genre as a hybrid in between high and low cultures; and on its social relevance as a product that reflects and gives voice to marginalized groups. Esperança Bielsa wisely uses the contrast in relevance that this genre has in both cities: whereas the *crónica* is highly popular and relevant in Mexico City, it has remained ignored in Guayaquil, and this contrast allows the author to offer both extremes of the genre. Bielsa warns the reader that her focus is on the written *crónica*, and thus she does not analyze radio *crónicas*, comics, and other expressions related to the function of the genre. She also explains that the book “offers a sociological analysis of the *crónica* in Mexico City and Guayaquil as an intermediate form of the contact zone between high and low culture, discussing both its production and reception, and focusing on specific narratives and their relationship to the social reality from which they emerge” (xiv).

To achieve her goal, Bielsa structures her study in seven chapters that can be grouped in three parts: the first two chapters are heavily theoretical, chapters three and four constitute a transition from general theory to a well defined context in terms of time and space, and chapters five and six explore individual writers; chapter seven is a brief conclusion on the reception and reading of the *crónicas*. This nicely set structure follows a logical evolution that leads the reader naturally into the *crónica* examples chosen by the author, after the theoretical debate.

The first chapter examines the sociological debate about high and low culture, both in terms of production and reception, paying special attention to the specific nature of the Latin American cultural scenario and to theories of cultural hybridity. Thus, Bielsa moves from Pierre Bourdieu, Fredric Jameson

or Theodor Adorno to Latin American critics such as Ángel Rama or Néstor García Canclini. This is a deep theoretical chapter that might pose some problems to a non-specialist reader. Then, chapter two focuses on the *crónica* as a hybrid genre in between high and low culture, offering a definition and historical overview of the genre, from the *crónica de Indias* in the 16th century up to U.S. New Journalism in the 1960s; Bielsa also offers here seven general features that allow for a basic characterization of the contemporary *crónica*. Chapter three is a transition from the more theoretical preceding chapters. Now, the focus is on the significance of the contemporary *crónica* in Mexico City and Guayaquil; thus, after a brief discussion of the *crónica* as a way of registering social movements without voice and representing a new culture, Bielsa studies in detail six texts chosen to represent the types of *crónicas* being published in Mexico City and Guayaquil (three from each city). The following chapter, four, explores issues of liminality, such as the position of the *cronista* as writing between journalism and literature, or the *crónica* as an exploration of everyday life but also and expression for the marginalized. She bases her observations on interviews she conducted with some *crónica* writers in both cities. Chapter five explores the *crónicas* of Mexican Emiliano Pérez Cruz, which describe Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl, one of the world's biggest shantytowns, located in Mexico City. In contrast with the view of the city, chapter six analyzes the *crónicas* of Ecuadorean Jorge Martillo about Guayaquil, more positive and related to the *modernista* tradition in Latin America. Finally, the last chapter studies the reception of the *crónica* and elaborates a theory related to personal experience in the city. A series of appendixes complete the book: a selection of *crónicas* studied in the text, both in the Spanish original and the corresponding English translation, and five profiles of *crónica* readers.

Bielsa's book studies a relevant genre in Latin American letters that has not received much critical attention until recently, a genre that departs from the classic fictional narrative, and which has deep roots in the contemporary nature and life of urban Latin America. Therefore, it is a welcome addition to any scholar interested in exploring the *crónica* or in moving from literary into more cultural studies (in fact, at the time the book was published, Bielsa was a member of the Centre for Translation and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Warwick). The reader should be warned that the title is a little misleading, since the "Latin America" of the title is pretty much reduced to only two countries—or rather, cities—although, to be fair, Bielsa does a good job by choosing two opposite poles in terms of valuation of the genre, Mexico City and Guayaquil.

Miguel González-Abellás
Washburn University

Gene H. Bell-Villada, ed. *Gabriel García Márquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude: A Casebook*. New York: Oxford UP, 2002. 176 pp.

This book is part of a series of studies of great works of literature and, according to the introduction, the first one to deal with a work that is non-Anglophone in origin (10). The fact that this series has dealt with literature in English is important, since these casebooks address the English-speaking reader, in particular the average undergraduate at U.S. higher learning institutions. This specific reader that the editor has in mind defines the selection of criticism included in the volume, which is dominated by British—and to a lesser degree, American—critics, and involves previously published criticism. Some important critics of Gabriel García Márquez in Spanish are absent, although Gene Bell-Villada includes two pieces in translation, one by Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes and the other by Puerto Rican critic Iris Zavala. This is not to say that the essays are not some of the best, but simply to indicate the intended reader of the book. Some pieces, such as James Higgins's, are classics for the Anglo reader, whereas others have been included for convenience—they happen to be in English and suitable for U.S. college students.

The volume follows the format of the rest of the series: after the general introduction, there is an interview with the novelist, García Márquez, and then ten essays that cover a wide range of topics and seem to follow a logical progression, from more general or global approaches to García Márquez and his novel, to explorations of some specific issues in the novel, and finally an exploration of the relevance of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in the international arena. Thus, the first two essays, by Fuentes and Higgins, offer an overview of García Márquez and his novel; Higgins is more comprehensive, and offers a nice summary of García Márquez's life before the publication of the novel in 1967, whereas Fuentes offers a visceral reaction to the work—the article was published a couple of years after the publication of the novel—calling it “foundational” in accordance with most of the novels of the “Boom.” Then, some specific topics are analyzed. The third essay by Clive Griffin explores all the different types of humor contained in the novel. The following study, by Lorraine Elena Roses, explores the use of women in the novel, and departs from Mario Vargas Llosa's analysis and previous criticism, to show the importance of marginal women in this narrative. Michael Wood's essay, “Aureliano's smile,” analyzes Colonel Aureliano Buendía, one of the main characters. After these three essays, Jean Franco moves into another cluster of articles, now dealing with issues of Western imperialism and colonialism; Franco compares *One Hundred Years of Solitude* with Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*, analyzing how imperialism and colonialism are observed through the eyes of the colonizer or the

colonized. Zavala's well researched essay keeps this comparative approach by reading *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as a chronicle of the Indies, similar to what the first Spaniards did when they wrote about the Americas for the European public, as well as in the tradition of the novels of chivalry. Bell-Villada, editor of the volume, makes a third appearance (after the introduction and the interview) with an essay about the Banana Company episodes in the novel, exploring its treatment of the general strike against the United Fruit Company in 1928. Brian Conniff's essay is an interesting approach to magical realism, relating it to issues of science, progress and power in Latin America. Finally, Carlos Rincón closes the volume with an impressive reading of the repercussions of the global success of the novel not only in the Western world, but also in Asia and the Muslim world, and how its art has been appropriated by other narrative practices around the world, all in the frame of globalization and the new appearance of Latin America as a controlling force, thanks to *telenovelas* and the literary boom. A selected bibliography, of titles both in English and in Spanish, completes the volume.

As previously mentioned, this book is highly recommended for undergraduate students at English-speaking institutions who might read *One Hundred Years of Solitude* in the English translation, or for the instructor who needs some useful resources to approach or teach this novel in its English translation. For this type of reader, the book offers a very good introduction to the work. Graduate students and scholars will find some of the essays interesting, although it is not a book for the specialist in Colombian literature or in García Márquez in particular.

Miguel González-Abellás
Washburn University

Albert Memmi. *Decolonization and the Decolonized*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 2006. 148 pp.

Decolonization and the Decolonized (2006), a follow-up to *The Colonizer and The Colonized* (1991), discusses problems faced by the formerly colonized Muslim-Arabic nations, drawing examples from North Africa, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East and Asia, countries Albert Memmi refers to as Third World Countries. To illustrate his points, he draws examples from many diverse countries, including Tunisia, Algeria, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Egypt, Jordan, Libya, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Israel, India, Uruguay, Argentina,

and Venezuela, to name but a few. Memmi identifies several key problems faced by countries in these regions, including the absence of democracy, corruption, the fragility of the judicial system, the power of religion, the condition of women, the Taliban regime, religious fundamentalism, suicide attacks, and slavery in some parts of Asia and Africa. The real challenge, however, Memmi argues, is to provide all inhabitants of our planet with the healthiest and most comfortable life possible through the management of natural resources, thus eliminating the need for deadly confrontations and upheavals. From the outset, Memmi stresses that his book is primarily descriptive and does not aim to offer any practical solutions.

In the first part, entitled “The New Citizen,” Memmi lists problems generally faced by developing nations, focusing on abject poverty, poor hygiene, administrative and political corruption, lack of foreign investment, and a lack of economic development. These conditions go hand in hand with political instability, a poor educational system, structural long-term unemployment, mass emigration of the elite and a widening of the gulf between rich and poor. Further problems include nepotism, censorship, sexual inequality, uncontrolled population growth, the inflated role of the military, and most importantly, the dangerous rise of religious fundamentalism in many formerly colonized nations. The lack of economic diversity is evidenced in the dependence of many of these countries on tourism. Memmi attributes this stagnation to political, military and administrative corruption and economic instability, while noting that it is generally blamed on colonialism, which supposedly continues to weigh on developing countries. Memmi accuses Arab-Muslim intellectuals of failing to evaluate and address their societies’ needs and problems in order to bring about a change for the better. He goes on to examine why these countries have failed to advance. Often, he argues, the tyrants or regimes in power have succeeded in convincing the population that their poverty is inevitable, a legacy of colonization. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he writes further, has been blown out of proportion and is being played out on a world stage and instrumentalized to divert attention from the search for effective solutions.

The inability and powerlessness of Arab-Muslim societies to bring about transformations that would enable them to adapt to the modern world express themselves in Islamic terrorism. Fundamentalism, Memmi argues, is an expression of an endangered identity, a desperate attempt to return to a supposedly lost integrity. Memmi plays down the concept of a moderate Islam, arguing that no religion is moderate, pointing out the dangers leaders expose themselves to by cooperating with fundamentalists, in particular the temptation of letting politics and religion merge. On violence, he notes that certain forms of post-independence violence—massacres, burnings, torture, lawlessness or institutional violence, suicide bombers or terrorism—are present in every society, and can only be contained if we manage to control the violence within us.

The second part, titled "The Immigrant," analyzes illegal immigration to Europe, taking North African immigrants in France as an example. Memmi notes that the integration of immigrants is both desired and rejected by the immigrants and host country alike. Immigration is seen as the "punishment for colonial sin," resulting from the failure of young countries to feed their population and provide them with freedom (82). Memmi further wonders what role the adoption of Western-European values should play in the future of Arab societies. Westernization, he stresses, has become a fact of life in the Arab world, be it in the shape of fast food or rock music. The West and some countries in the Arab world now share many values, including respect for human rights and the autonomy of the individual. Muslims cannot continue to lock up women, but must face their sexuality. On immigrant identity, he notes that immigrants gradually develop an increasingly composite identity as a result of their immersion in another culture and therefore must renounce part of their former identity. In a discussion reminiscent of Moroccan novelist Tahar Ben Jelloun's *Le racisme expliqué à ma fille* and *L'Hospitalité française*, Memmi analyzes the problems faced by the children of first generation immigrants, some of whom vent their feeling of disenfranchisement by committing petty crimes or dealing with drugs or setting cars on fire as happened in many French suburbs in 2007.

On globalization, Memmi stresses that this trend cannot be reversed, due to the interdependence of third and first world countries. After the shock of the September 11 terrorist attack, the West must now organize this dependence if it wants to ensure its own safety. Using the flowery language characteristic of his style, he notes that the ageing problem, immigration and mixed marriages are presented as "diseases" eating away at European societies. Memmi further criticizes European nations for lacking civil pride: Europe no longer defends itself spiritually nor militarily, having turned its defense over to the United States. Europe, he continues, is locked in a politics of procrastination, waiting for the oil wells to dry up and relying on the weakness of third world countries, an attitude that might prove fatal in the face of rising Islamic fundamentalism.

In conclusion, Memmi argues that the third world remains afflicted with poverty, corruption, and despotism, which often result in humiliation, resentment, and violence. On the upside, these countries possess immense raw materials and young populations, which can compensate for the West's declining birthrates. They also have a diplomatic and military presence to be reckoned with internationally. Memmi reiterates that fighting extreme poverty and better wealth-management are a must: "Wealth ... should belong to everybody and not just to a select few, including natural energy" (142). However, he does not offer any solutions on how to fight poverty and corruption, other than stressing that the former colonized nations' rights to self-governance and economic liberalism are key in bringing about change. Memmi concludes by calling on Mus-

lim nations to develop rationality and show solidarity in fighting fundamentalism, which, he argues, jeopardizes world peace. The thematic organization of the book is somewhat confusing and sometimes Memmi's analyses appear simplistic, biased, and utopian. For instance, he calls for a "universalization" of Western civilization via the creation of a "genuinely international body and the elimination of partisan organizations," stressing that third world countries are to share the "best aspects of the Western world" (143). Arab-Muslims, he argues, must acknowledge that the West is now part of their world and vice versa. *Decolonization and the Decolonized* makes for an interesting read and, given Memmi's erudition on the subject, is thought-provoking—in particular the second chapter on the Immigrant, which could be used in the classroom discussing immigration in France. Nevertheless, it is—as it indeed claims—largely descriptive, and offers no groundbreaking new insights. In the afterword Memmi deplores the disappointing reception of the book by the French press, noting that critics by and large ignored the problems addressed and analyzed in the book, instead focusing on the author's life.

Christa Jones
Utah State University

Erin Graff Zivin. *The Wandering Signifier: Rhetoric of Jewishness in the Latin American Imaginary*. Durham: Duke UP, 2008. 222 pp.

The Wandering Signifier is a study with an extremely well-conceived central research problem. It stands out among recent works by literary scholars interested in Latin American Jewish studies. Most of the research has been on Jewish writers, often but by no means always with a focus on questions of identity; in addition, there have been many studies of the Jewish subject matter of the non-Jewish Jorge Luis Borges, and the occasional scholarly treatment of anti-Semitism in Latin American writing. Erin Graff Zivin moves in a different direction by studying "the Jew" and "Jewishness" as unstable signifiers that may be filled with widely varying content as they appear and re-appear in Spanish American and Brazilian texts and are made to serve different political and literary rhetorical needs.

Wandering Signifier features many quite brief analyses of "Jewishness" in a variety of texts by a diverse set of authors. Some of the writers are non-Jews, including anti-Semites, figures who appear neutral on the topic of Jews, and Borges, known for his fascination with all things Jewish. The others are either writers generally perceived as Jewish or such murky cases as the half-Jewish

Colombian novelist Jorge Isaacs and the Brazilian Carlos Heitor Cony, whose ethnic identity sows confusion in the reading public. Most, but not all, of the texts analyzed are literary in nature. The emphasis is firmly away from identity or experience and toward rhetorical representation and the ethical complications that it occasions.

As the study approaches a close, Graff Zivin considers some more general and abstract questions, while still carrying out analyses of particular texts. She draws to a considerable extent on the thought of Emmanuel Levinas, with his extreme suspicion that the representation of the Other, in this case writing about the Other rather than carrying on a face-to-face exchange with him or her, by its nature cannot be an ethical practice. Graff Zivin recognizes that many of the texts that she analyzes might seem to support Levinas's apprehensive outlook on representation, but goes on to observe: "Yet I would problematize Levinas's repudiation of the written word as ontologically violent by asking the following questions: can 'the face of the other' enter the literary text, or does every attempt to characterize otherness within writing necessarily destroy or violate difference? Is an ethical treatment of the Other possible within literary discourse?... In codifying 'Jewishness,' is the Other always already thematized, or is it possible to identify the presence of something else, a remainder to the process of thematization that resists representation?" (21).

The way in which Graff Zivin has framed her central research issue, relying on her own original ideas as well as contemporary critical theory, was really a stroke of genius. Because of the coherence with which the study has been conceived, the author can analyze within one study texts by Spanish American and Brazilian writers of diverse ethnic origin and outlook, ranging from the late nineteenth century to nearly the end of the twentieth. Graff Zivin looks especially at passages focused on diagnosis, transactions, and conversion. The sub-themes treated include concepts of disease and health, avarice, exotic female beauty, promiscuity and prostitution, learning, marginality, cosmopolitanism, difference, and many other topics that at one time or another have been associated with "Jewishness." The texts are not analyzed in chronological order, but rather grouped by association with the "Jewish" feature that they represent. I particularly appreciate that, while Graff Zivin borrows very substantially from the work of other literary critics, especially Sylvia Molloy, and theorists and philosophers such as Levinas, her own thought still stands out clearly most of the time.

The texts that Graff Zivin examines are a disparate lot. A few are too blatant to allow for much complexity of analysis. No sophisticated conceptual framework or critical acumen is required to recognize the 1891 *La bolsa* by Julián Martel of Argentina as a crudely xenophobic novel that relies on all-too-familiar Jewish stereotypes; it could have been dispatched in a couple of paragraphs. Texts of greater ambiguity offer Graff Zivin more material to delve into,

and she does particularly well with the celebrated 1867 novel *María* by Isaacs, the son of a British Jewish father converted to his wife's Catholicism. In *María*, Jewishness is associated with an alarming threat to health, but also with the exotic magnetism that makes the ill-fated heroine irresistible to the narrator. At various points in the text, the narrator assigns and un-assigns Jewishness to María and to his more tenuously Jewish self.

The ingenious analysis of the lyrics of "Quem dá mais?" (recorded in 1932), an exercise in defining Brazil's national essence and the work of the popular Brazilian samba writer Noel Rosa, turns up ambiguities within what is fundamentally an anti-Semitic caricature. As emblems of Brazilianness are auctioned off, an incomplete guitar is won by "a Jew, who threatens Brazilian authenticity not only through his foreignness but also because he complicates the very idea of national identity by not belonging to *any* nation" (85). But in a complicating twist, the winning bidder resells the guitar to a museum, so in a way "the Jewish buyer is restoring this symbol of Brazilianness to its rightful owner: the Brazilian people" (86). The acuity of this analysis made me wish that Graff Zivin had more often ventured beyond the bounds of literary writing into popular music, film, and other media. Of course, a reader can always think of more texts and artifacts that an author could beneficially have analyzed.

In short, *Wandering Signifier* is a thoughtful study whose conceptualization makes it an original contribution to Latin American Jewish literary studies. Also worthy of note is the jacket art for *Wandering Signifier*, featuring a reproduction of the painting *Eternal Wanderers* by Lasar Segall, the Lithuanian-born Brazilian artist best known for his themes of Jewish immigrant life.

Naomi Lindstrom

University of Texas at Austin

Dawn Fulton. *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism*. Charlottesville and London: U of Virginia P, 2008. 185 pp.

In her first book, French scholar Dawn Fulton provides a fascinating analysis of critic and author Maryse Condé's writings through the lens of Condé's awareness of the often problematical reception of Caribbean francophone literature in the global marketplace. According to Fulton's masterful introduction, Condé's fiction and non-fiction reveal her preoccupation with challenging stereotypical representations of West Indian identity, race, gender, and language. Fulton mentions several novels that exhibit Condé's "signs of dissent," from *Heremak-honon* (1976), whose Guadeloupean protagonist fails to discover her "roots"

in Africa (9), to *Histoire de la femme cannibale* (2003), in which the discourse about cannibalism exposes “preexisting knowledge as ... incriminating”(15). She concludes the introduction by sketching her plan for the seven chapters in the book: to discuss “signs of resistance” in Condé’s works (12) as well as Condé’s assessment of the political dimension of literary representation (13). Moreover, Fulton notes, intertextuality, or one novel’s explicit or implicit reference to another literary work, will be shown to destabilize the reader’s preconceived notions of what Third World francophone literature is really like.

Whereas Fulton’s initial plan for *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Post-colonial Criticism* seemingly interrelates Condé’s writings structurally, politically, and referentially, her individual chapters do little in this regard. Chapters 1, 4, 5, 6, and 7 each focus on specific novels, thereby calling the reader’s attention to their original status as literary journal articles. In Chapter 2, however, Fulton compares *Moi, Tituba, sorcière ... noire de Salem* to American literature about the Salem witch trials and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s 18th century novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, in order to highlight Condé’s departure from these centuries-old stories and, hence, her originality.

Chapter 3 further explains the intertextuality within Condé’s novels. *Traversée de la mangrove* and *La migration des coeurs* are both seen as allegorical narratives of traditional Western stories. The former presents the common theme of the interloper versus the native citizen: the mysterious death of Francis Sancher, an outsider to Guadeloupe, incites several narrators to speak of their “inside information” regarding the deceased, thereby underscoring their fascination for the exotic and their demystification of Sancher. Fulton deems the *La migration des coeurs* the *Wuthering Heights* of the “Caribbean archipelago” (68).

Her fourth chapter, however, no longer discusses intertextuality; rather, it contrasts the protagonists of *Heremakhonon* and *Desirada* regarding their ability to manage new physical and mental spaces. By referring to Cathy Caruth’s writings on trauma, Fulton mostly describes *Desirada*’s Marie-Noëlle, who has yet to claim the complete narrative of her rape as her own story. This portrait opposes that of the highly adaptable Véronica in *Heremakhonon*, as she pursues her identity quest in Africa, all the while providing a personal critique of her behavior.

Because Fulton designates Condé’s use of intertextuality as significant in both her introduction and three of her chapters, her seventh and final chapter, titled “Unfamiliar Cannibals: Postcolonial Readings in *Histoire de la femme cannibale*,” strikes the reader as shortsighted. Fulton asserts that the cannibal figure is “embedded in the discourse of postcolonial studies” (124) and that it “provides a site of radical opposition for Western understandings of the self” (126), without delving into the intertextual aspect of the cannibal image itself. This cursory treatment oversimplifies Condé’s novel. Her very choice of subject,

that is, a young woman's being accused of cannibalism and the ramifications of this label, resonates for French literature students, like Condé was herself, as an illustration of Michel de Montaigne's essay XXXI from *Livre Premier*, "Des cannibales." Montaigne warns the reader against mistaking hearsay for empirical fact and presupposing that other cultures function similarly to one's own. Moreover, he avers that by condemning others' behavior as barbaric, we avoid looking at our own acts of cruelty. Through its narrative requiring the reader to confirm or refute the idea of cannibalism for him- or herself, *Histoire de la femme cannibale* exemplifies the dangerous outcomes of unverified suppositions, as posited by Montaigne in his essay.

To her credit, Fulton cites Peter Hulme's etymological tracing of the term "cannibal" to the 15th century travel journal of Christopher Columbus. Nevertheless, her exclusion of Montaigne's 16th century discussion of Western presumptions about non-Western practices is a glaring omission, especially in the context of "literary cannibalism," a term that Condé has used to describe her own writings (2). Fulton defines the expression as "an appropriation and revision of canonical works of Western literature" (2-3); therefore, an acknowledgement of Montaigne's possible influence on Condé's choice of title and subject would have been in order.

Despite Fulton's insistence on Condé's political thoughts about authorship in *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism*, her conclusion, titled: "Signs of Translation," oddly reduces her six-chapter analysis of Condé's novels and self-reflections on writing to a speculative section about how Condé's husband, Richard Philcox, perceives his work as his wife's translator. Subsequently, the implications of translating French Creole are discussed. The power dynamic associated with language choice would have served as a bridge for Fulton to reiterate the major themes from her study, especially Condé's concern with the political aspects of literary representation, but Fulton does not take the opportunity to do so. Rather, she closes with a weak statement of what Condé's oeuvre "seems to affirm," namely "the importance of a continuing dialogue between Francophone studies and Postcolonial [sic] studies" (150). The reader remains unconvinced.

Shortcomings aside, *Signs of Dissent: Maryse Condé and Postcolonial Criticism* offers an exceptional synthesis of Condé's works in its introduction, and clear analyses from a political perspective of Condé's fiction and non-fiction in its ensuing chapters. It also contains a wealth of resources: endnotes invite the reader to do further research about Condé, as do an extensive bibliography and index at the end of the study. Moreover, Fulton's prose is flawless, which makes reading her book a very pleasurable experience.

Jane E. Evans

University of Texas at El Paso

Anne Lambright. *Creating the Hybrid Intellectual Subject, Space and the Feminine in the Narrative of José María Arguedas*. Lewisburg: Bucknell UP, 2007. 308 pp.

Anne Lambright achieves two goals in this book. On the one hand, she constructs the category of the “hybrid intellectual” to describe the interstitial knowledge production of Peruvian novelist José María Arguedas. On the other, she argues that the Peruvian writer employs the feminine voice to articulate his asymmetrical positioning in relation to the power exercised by the Peruvian coastal elites, given his status as “a provincial writer in a cosmopolitan literary world” (20). This intertwined process drives her re-reading of Arguedas.

Lambright divides her book between narratives “set in the Highlands,” and “narratives set on the Coast,” and proceeds to a critical overview of Arguedas’s literary production, from his earliest short fiction to his last, unfinished novel, *El zorro de arriba y el zorro de abajo* ‘*The Fox from Up Above and the Fox from Down Below*,’ dedicating important chapters to *Yawar Fiesta*, *Los ríos profundos* ‘*Deep Rivers*,’ *Todas las sangres* ‘*All Bloods*,’ and one to a lesser-known work, *El Sexto* ‘*The Sixth*.’ Throughout her examination, Lambright proposes that the trajectory of the feminine “sheds new light on the understanding of the literary progress of his national vision” (20).

For Lambright the feminine plays an active role in Arguedas’s fiction because it enables the author to configure a subjective counterpoint to Western modernity that Arguedas often represents as leading to a monopoly of power and knowledge (coloniality), one that erases indigenous knowledge production and that, in his view, also fails to democratize life. She reads women characters as borderline figures who symbolize an insurrection of subjected knowledges. Though they are Western subjects themselves, and often members of the elite, such as the *hacendado* Fermín Aragón de Peralta’s wife Matilde in *Todas las sangres*, or else *mestizas* of different classes like doña Felipa and “la Opa” in *Los ríos profundos*, these women embrace and represent emblematically, in the eyes of the Western world, their option for a communitarian indigenous culture and ethics. Thus, if Peruvian heterogeneity is represented by the tension dividing the indigenous communal system and the Western capitalist one, the effectivity of will displayed by female characters textually enforces indigenous values. The role these women play also serves as a bridge between both worlds. In this conception, women and “the feminine” become border thinkers describing knowledge systems located on the margins of, or outside, the world colonized by Western modernity. However, as Lambright herself recognizes, “the narrative investment in the feminine is, while attempted, often frustrated, and much of the importance of the feminine remains on the level of action and character” (147). Nevertheless, it is in this exploration of the feminine that this book dis-

plays its originality and its major contribution to Arguedian scholarship. When tracing the feminine throughout Arguedian narrative, this book moves along with buoyancy and grace, getting the ratio of book contents description to critical reflection exactly right. Lambright lays out the basics of Arguedas's life and her subtle critique of the major novels like a well-orchestrated symphony, leaving no doubt that she masters even the most recondite angles and cognitive dissonance of the lesser known works or stories that few have read.

If this otherwise excellent reading of Arguedas has a flaw, it is in some of its theoretical presuppositions. Lambright describes the "hybrid intellectual" in strictly Arguedian terms: "a member of the white ruling classes who befriends and identifies with the indigenous communities, and who is prepared to fight for them" (56). The problem is that this concept is theoretically loaded in contemporary cultural studies and critical theory. Hybridity emerged in Néstor García Canclini's *Culturas híbridas* (1989; *Hybrid Cultures*, 1995), shortly before an analogous concept was introduced by Homi Bhabha. García Canclini's book became a turning point in the emergence of the field of Latin American cultural studies. As Ana Del Sarto stated in *The Latin American Cultural Studies Reader* (2004), hybridity became a central paradigm during the 1990s as a descriptive category, forcing most theorizations on the field to allude to it (181). Yet Lambright does not problematize her usage of the concept, or argue for an alternative definition to oppose those of García Canclini or Bhabha (nor for a need to create a theoretical body based on non-Western subjugated knowledges). Whereas she does list *Hybrid Cultures* and Bhabha's *Location of Culture* and *Nation and Narration* among her works cited, there is no index entry associating the concept of hybridity with either of these two theorists (indeed, García Canclini is not listed in the index at all, though his book is cited on page 145; also, Bhabha's *Nation and Narration* appears as published in 1994, when it actually came out in 1990). Lambright cites a wide range of theorists, from Kaja Silverman (the role of ideology in the mythical construction of society), to Julia Kristeva's categories of the semiotic and the symbolic; yet, except for Kristeva's, we do not always see this theory actually at work in the analysis itself. The book also begs for a more theoretically contrasted definition of "the feminine," defined solely as "parts of the minds, hearts, and emotions of the subjects that Arguedas ... endeavors to evoke in his writing" (9). Whereas Lambright states that Arguedian narrative constructs a different, Andean-centered "masculine/feminine hierarchical opposition" (10) to that of the West, and this assertion would ideally position her to argue for articulating a need to move in the direction of a non-Western theoretical corpus, or else, to posit the limits of the Western one, she does not develop it further in either direction.

To my liking, these problems do not detract from the overall good reading of Arguedas, or from the sensitivity with which Lambright construes the feminine in them. It does, however, create a sort of divide between the theoretic-

cal components and her more comfortable reading of Arguedas's vast oeuvre, which is done excellently, in an arguably original and uncanny way, one that makes a substantive contribution to a new understanding of the great Peruvian writer.

Arturo Arias
University of Texas at Austin

Andrew Sobanet. *Jail Sentences: Representing Prison in Twentieth-Century French Fiction*. Lincoln: U of Nebraska P, 2008. xii +254 pp.

Jail Sentences is a book about prison writing, and as Andrew Sobanet tells his readers, there seems to be a close relationship between incarceration and the desire to tell stories, which occasionally evolves into an urge to write novels. Motivations for writing about the prison experience are many, be it to come to terms with one's social relegation or to reconstruct the self. Often prison writings try to convey to those unfamiliar with life behind bars the inhumane living conditions that for many inmates can only be shouldered by developing bonds of solidarity among prisoners.

Many canonical authors—whether they have been prisoners themselves, e.g., Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Oscar Wilde, Jack London, or not, e.g., Alexandre Dumas, Victor Hugo, Albert Camus—have written about life in prison and have thus influenced the public's perception of the prison experience. Moreover, as Sobanet notes, inmates as creators of prison narratives emerged in significant numbers during the twentieth century (3). Additionally, those in charge of prisoners also felt compelled to document their experiences. Consequently, twentieth and twenty-first century readers are well familiar with the commonplaces of prison literature, its themes, and its imagery.

Sobanet investigates a particular form of prison narrative, "fictional texts that purport to document conditions and relations behind bars" (3-4). He sets out to analyze the narrative devices, themes, and ideological underpinnings of these prison novels, also focusing on the relationship between form and ideology (4). In particular, Sobanet wants to show how fiction can function as a documentary tool. His goal is "to analyze techniques that are employed in fictional and autobiographical literature as well as in hybrid genres ... that attempt to obfuscate the distinction between the two" (4).

Jail Sentences focuses on four French prison novels, which the author presents in chronological order: Victor Serge's *Les hommes dans la prison* (1930),

Jean Genet's *Miracle de la rose* (1946), Albertine Sarrazin's *La cavale* 'The Runaway' (1965), and François Bon's *Prison* (1997). Serge, Genet, and Sarrazin were prisoners themselves; Bon taught writing in a youth detention center in southern France. The latter invented, integrated, and reworked prisoners' texts into his prison narrative to publicize the inadequacies of the French prison system. Thus the authenticity of the prisoners' voices, whether narrating true events or inventing stories, is compromised by a powerful editor, Bon, who intercedes between the prisoner and the reader. Given that the testimonial character of this prison narrative appears more problematic than that of the other novels analyzed in *Jail Sentences*, one might question its inclusion.

Sobanet, who had access to the original prisoners' texts—collected by Bon and labeled "Parfois je me demande"—demonstrates how the author manipulated prisoners' texts, supplementing them with his own stories, at times explicitly identifying parts of his writing as fictional and thus creating in his readers the erroneous belief that everything not labeled fictional is factual. Sobanet very nicely unveils the ambiguous nature of this text, which often led critics to mis-read *Prison* as a documentation of Bon's experience in prison.

In a prefatory note to *Les hommes dans la prison* Serge states: "Everything in this book is fictional and everything is true."¹ Serge uses fiction to faithfully document not only prison conditions, those that he had lived himself, but also the political systems that allowed them to develop. "Truth" in this context alludes to the exact documenting of life in prison as well as to the implied truth value of Serge's political convictions. Sobanet notes rightfully that this prefatory statement establishes a contract between the author and the reader, allowing the author to choose the degree to which the representation would mirror carceral reality or political truth (35). Despite the prefatory note, Serge's text has been mainly understood as testimonial. To illustrate the shortcomings of such a one-sided reading, Sobanet contrasts Serge's memoirs to *Les hommes dans la prison*, identifying discursive and rhetorical differences between these texts.

"A Pariah's Paradise," the second chapter of *Jail Sentences*, focuses on Genet's *Miracle de la rose*. Sobanet argues that this text should primarily be read as a work of fiction, because the text's referentiality appears to be evoked through narrative strategies modeled after "the conventions of referential texts" (63). For example, the opening sentence of the novel has testimonial quality and the narrator-protagonist carries the same name as the author, enticing the reader into believing that what is told had been experienced by the author. On the other hand, Sobanet demonstrates that Genet uses strategies and techniques of the realm of fiction to construct the narrator-protagonist's experiences in prison as a form of social protest, positioning him as a pariah. According to Sobanet, Genet uses the prison as a means for social criticism targeting "the mainstream French bourgeoisie" (62). Sobanet's vague use of political terms somewhat compromises this analysis.

The third chapter focuses on the “female Genet,” Sarrazin; both authors indeed show many biographical commonalities. *La cavale*, in large parts written in prison, becomes the main focus of Sobanet’s analysis. The recidivist, Anick Damien, Sarrazin’s alter ego (both first and last name had been Sarrazin’s at some point in her life), tells the story of her incarceration in different prisons. Though the text is subtitled a novel, Sarrazin said that she wanted it to be read as an autobiography. Sobanet illustrates how the author uses fiction to create for the uninitiated readers a more coherent picture of the prison world and its bureaucratic structure. He compellingly argues that Sarrazin’s main narrative goal consists in convincing the reader that incarceration for the average female prisoner means debilitation rather than rehabilitation.

Sobanet’s study underscores the importance of the prison novel as a genre, and he quite skillfully demonstrates how the authors in question use fictional elements and paratextual markers to give their novels documentary and testimonial qualities. However, Sobanet’s attempt at interpreting form in relation to the novels’ ideological messages is a trifle superficial and betrays the author’s lack of familiarity with political movements such as anarchism and Trotskyism, which would be relevant for a correct ideological reading of Serge.

Elisabeth-Christine Muelsch
Angelo State University

1 Serge, Victor. *Men in Prison*. Trans. Richard Greeman. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969: n.p.

Olga López-Valero Colbert. *The Gaze on the Past: Popular Culture and History in Antonio Muñoz Molina’s Novels*. Lewisburg, PA: Bucknell UP, 2007. 221 pp.

As a monograph on a single author, this book is definitely a *rara avis* in today’s trends in literary studies, but one that makes an original contribution not only to the growing scholarship on Antonio Muñoz Molina’s novels, but also to the broader discipline of Hispanic literary studies. The premise of *The Gaze on the Past* is straightforward: this book explores how Muñoz Molina’s novels embrace popular culture to channel an ethical preoccupation with historical memory. The point of departure for this study is an equally straightforward argument: Olga López-Valero Colbert contends that it is “through popular culture that the structure of feeling of a period can be more easily accessed” (13). Identifying, thus, Raymond Williams’s concept of “structure of feeling” as the main structuring notion of this study, the author immediately establishes the terms

of the academic intervention that she intends to carry out with her book: a cross-reading of literature and popular culture against the backdrop of the literary text's historical matrix. In this way, this book complements the existing narratological and semiotic studies on Muñoz Molina by adding a necessary historicist perspective to fathom crucial aspects of his novels.

After explaining in brief and clear terms Williams's concept—what I consider one of the main virtues of this book—as a range of social experiences that “defines a period,” the author delves into applying this concept to the context of Spain during Francoism and the Transition to Democracy. López-Valero Colbert offers the main features of the structure of feeling of both periods of recent Spanish history, while simultaneously providing an informative historical overview. For Francoist Spain, she identifies silence, *inmovilismo* ‘immobility,’ and exclusion; the main aspects of the structure of feeling for the Transition are amnesia and oblivion, both of them expressed through popular culture and spectrality. The rest of the book is organized around different popular media that bear important narrative weight within Muñoz Molina's first four novels: namely, visual media such as photography, sculpture, and film, and voice media such as the radio and popular music.

Chapter 1, “Privileging the Visual,” provides a thorough account of how two of the main experiences of the structure of feeling of Francoism, *inmovilismo* and silence, are represented through the lens of photography and, to a lesser degree, sculpture, in *Beatus Ille* (1986) and *El jinete polaco* (1991). Photography, due to its muteness and its capacity to freeze time in an image, is particularly fitting “to convey the experiences of silence and stillness,” the suppression of expression and change that underpin Francoism (48). Especially illuminating is the way the author, drawing from Eric Hobsbawm, unfolds how photography is used in Muñoz Molina's first novel as a medium with a narrative function to “invent a tradition” in order to maintain a continuity with the past.

Chapter 2, “The Aesthetics of Fear,” tackles how fear, another pervasive experience during Francoism, is expressed in *Beltenebros* (1989) and *El invierno en Lisboa* (1987) channeled through the formal conventions and motifs borrowed from the thriller, the film *noir* universe, the gothic novel, and the sentimental novel. The most useful part of the chapter is the detailed breakdown of the “claustrophobic framing” devices from film *noir* that Muñoz Molina uses in *Beltenebros* to punctuate the feeling of paranoia and fear of the characters. This thorough examination of *Beltenebros* contrasts with the comparatively little space devoted to *El invierno en Lisboa*, thus making the literary analyses in this chapter seem unbalanced.

Chapter 3, “Music and Exile,” is the most coherent chapter of the book. It analyzes three uses of popular music in *El invierno en Lisboa* and *El jinete polaco*: “music as a self-reflexive mechanism, music in connection with memory and identity, and music in relation to exile” (111). Drawing from the already

numerous previous studies of this very subject in the novels of Muñoz Molina, López-Valero provides an original angle: she convincingly demonstrates how these two novels effectively represent the experiences of amnesia and oblivion that are recurrent in the structure of feeling of the transition to democracy. Moreover, the author succeeds in showing how both novels have different ways of dealing with these experiences. Whereas in *El invierno* the characters keep rejecting the past in an abiding state of amnesia, in *El jinete polaco* the main characters are able to break “the cycle of oblivion,” thereby opening the door for a constructive future ahead (142). As the author cleverly points out, it is plausible to make a reading of these two novels in dialogue with the historical juncture of the Spanish transition to democracy and the “pacts of silence” and amnesia that characterize the development of the transition.

Chapter 4, “Memory and Voice Media,” is the chapter that offers the most original insights of this book. The author focuses on the narrative function in Muñoz Molina’s novels of media such as the radio, the telephone, the answering machine, and the jukebox, offering a compelling interpretation of the pervasiveness of ghostly presences. Above all, López-Valero analyzes how most of these ghostly or quasi-ghostly figures are female characters, such as Mariana in *Beatus Ille*, Rebeca Osorio in *Beltenebros*, and Fátima in *Plenilunio*. These dead characters appear as ghostly presences or characters with weak materiality, representing “the fragility of the female position in a patriarchal order” (171). While Muñoz Molina tries in these novels to provide women the opportunity to express their voice and thereby regain agency, he really does not, as López-Valero cleverly argues, give women the chance to speak and tell their own stories, which are always told by and filtered through the gaze of a male narrator.

Clearly written and well-argued, *The Gaze on the Past* is a valuable contribution that offers a new angle—the analysis of the effective use of popular culture and visual media—to the existing scholarship on the way Muñoz Molina’s novels engage with the past and the issue of historical memory.

Jorge Pérez
University of Kansas

Warren Motte. *Fiction Now: The French Novel in the Twenty-First Century*. Champaign and London: Dalkey Archive, 2008. 237 pp.

What distinguishes Warren Motte’s book is his ability to communicate his pas-

sion for literature, reading, and writing practices. As he analyzes contemporary French self-reflexive novels, it is as if his own writing is also the result of a self-reflection on how to write a critical study. In this work, which is a sequel of his *Fables of the Novel: French Fiction Since 1990*, he provides us with an engaging and simply written critique of eight representative authors of innovative French fiction since 2001: Jean Echenoz, Marie Redonnet, Christian Gailly, Lydie Salvayre, Gérard Gavarry, Hélène Lenoir, Patrick Lapeyre, and Christine Montalbetti. The book is divided into nine chapters, one chapter per author, and an introduction.

In the introduction, Motte argues that contrary to the prediction that followed the “New Novel” announcing the “death of the novel,” the contemporary French novel is very much alive and innovative. His study focuses on metaliterary texts, texts that are self-reflexive, or what he calls “critical novel[s]” (11) that ask us “to rethink what the novel may be as a cultural form” (11). Although he limits himself to Metropolitan French literature due to his specialization, leaving aside Francophone literature, and admittedly chooses his favorite authors, he gives a long list of other authors of interest (that I reproduce here for interested readers): “Jacques Jouet, Jean-Phillipe Toussaint, Marie Ndiaye, Antoine Volodine, Tiphaine Samoyault, Patrick Deville, Olivier Targowla, Anne Garréta, Marcel Bénabou, Xabi Molia, Olivia Osenenthal, Isabelle Lévesque, Iégor Gran, Danielle Mémoire, Eric Chevillard, Linda Lê, Nathalie Quintane, Laurent Mauvignier, Christian Oster, Marie Darrieussecq, Maryline Desbiolles, Pierre Michon, Eric Laurent, Annie Ernaux, Caroline Lamarche, Jacques Serena, Olivier Rolin, Régis Jauffret, Amélie Nothomb, Pierre Senges, Emmanuèle Bernheim, Yann Apperry, Marie Cosnay, Emmanuel Carrère, Anne Godard, Yves Ravey and Tanguy Viel” (13).

In each chapter, Motte spends a good amount of time summarizing each novel—since his readership is considered to be unfamiliar with the novels or the authors—while providing detailed analyses of textual passages. The first chapter analyzes Echenoz’s *Au Piano* (2003) and examines how Echenoz reflects upon the novel by “performing” its writing. He stages the narrator’s interaction with the readers, constantly misleading them and forcing them to be actively involved. Motte also argues that the main character’s quest for an impossible woman mirrors the author’s quest for the impossible novel. The second chapter examines Redonnet’s *Diego* (2005), a novel *engagé* about an undocumented immigrant, which critically reflects upon hospitality in French society. After a discussion of Redonnet’s coming to terms with her abandoned father’s name (L’Hospitalier), Motte concludes that the novel offers a reflection upon the artist as an immigrant struggling to find a place in society. Gailly’s *Un Soir au Club* (2001), which was made into a movie in 2009, reflects upon the fate of literature through an ironic meditation on jazz and relationships. In the fourth chapter, Motte argues that Salvayre, the daughter of Spanish Repub-

lican refugees in France, strategically uses her marginal position in her novels to metacomment on the social institution of literature. Gavarry's *Hop là! Un, deux, trois* (2001) rewrites Judith's seduction and Holofernes's decapitation in the context of French poor suburbs. This tripartite novel, in which the author rewrites the same story three times in the context of the coconut palm, the cargo ship, and the Centaur, uses theatrical techniques and the oral tradition to make a social and literary commentary. Motte convincingly argues about Lenoir's *Le Répit* (2003) that the indecisiveness of the protagonist, torn between different women and life choices, mirrors the readers' search for meaning. In the same way, Lapeyre's *L'Homme-sœur* (2004), a novel built around the desire of a man for his sister, highlights the role of readers' expectations in the reading process. Finally, Montalbetti's *Western* (2005) also plays with readers' expectations by way of multiple digressions. Motte argues that digressions are essential to the narrative and reminds us that Montalbetti published an academic book on digressions.

Metafiction has a long tradition in France (see Denis Diderot's *Jacques the Fatalist* for instance). It would have been helpful to briefly contextualize these contemporary works in the history of French literature. Although Motte's *Fiction Now* lacks a conclusion and leaves us hanging, he introduces highly diverse authors in an organized and concise book written with an engaging tone. In sum, he makes us want to (re)read them. This alone—bringing us back to literature and its pleasures—deserves a special mention.

Martine Fernandes

University of South Florida, Saint Petersburg

Hélène Cixous. *Hyperdream*. Trans. Beverley Bie Brahic. Cambridge, UK & Malden, MA: Polity P, 2009. x + 168 pp.

The cover of this English translation of Hélène Cixous's recent book features *Nuits d'étoiles*, a painting by the Italian artist Leonardo Cremonini, which has in the foreground an armchair draped with what appears to be a sheer linen gown; the same painting is found inside the cover of the original French edition of the novel [*Hyperrêve* (Paris: Editions Galilée, 2006)]. Cremonini's painting effectively evokes the feeling of a moment outside of time conjured by Cixous's prose, but the cloth also suggests another metaphor for the experience of reading the novel, an experience at once intimate and solitary, as the author's words and emotions reach the reader filtered, but nonetheless poignant. For *Hyperdream* is a very personal account of a moment when the narrator lived

as if outside of time—the moments, days and weeks after she learned of the impending death of both her mother and her dear friend Jacques Derrida, referred to as “my friend” or “J.D.” in the text. And yet, the novel’s narrative voice is muted and hypnotic; as a result, it invites readers to take detours through the memories that shape their own relationships to present, past, future, and death. Whether one responds to Cixous’s descriptions of walks with her brother in the countryside around Bordeaux and along the dunes at Pilat, to her reading of the map of her mother’s wounded skin, to her struggle with her awareness of mourning-to-come, or to her realization of the significance of the old metal bed her brother has slept on for so many years (“Benjamin’s Bed”), the work will strike very different chords for different readers. It is to the credit of both author and translator that they have brought forth a voice at once so measured and dispassionate, and so intimate and emotionally charged.

Cixous’s text, not surprisingly, poses numerous challenges to the translator. In addition to her insistent word play—at the end of one particular passage readers of the translation may find themselves trying to calculate the sum of *somme* and *sommier* (66-67)—there are frequent references to the work of Derrida and Walter Benjamin. The novel is also peppered with phrases in Latin, German and Yiddish, as well as with allusions to Jewish ritual. For example, the traditional wish expressed by diasporic Jews at Passover, “Next year in Jerusalem,” is rewritten with an echo of *le 14 juillet*, the French national holiday and the date when the narrator learned of her friend’s prognosis: “I wonder where we’ll be next Jerusalem 14” (28). Brahic has, of course, worked extensively with Cixous on previous translations, including *Portrait of Jacques Derrida as a Young Jewish Saint* (2004) and *The Day I Wasn’t There* (2006); she has also translated works by Derrida and, most recently, Kristeva. In this case, Brahic’s strategy is that of amplification. To suggest the layers of meaning embedded in Cixous’s words, she often provides not only a (double) translation, but also the original French phrase in italics: “*tu es le temps*, you are time, killing time” (vii; 3); or “there’s an *auteur* and an *ôteur*, a plotter and a deleter” (67). While this is in the main a satisfying solution, at times it weighs down the text. It also brushes up against Cixous’s own use of italics for emphasis, something that grows more frequent as the text proceeds. Still, Brahic’s choices encourage English-speaking readers—regardless of their familiarity with French—to be attentive to the work’s poetry (Brahic is, of course, both a poet herself and a translator of poetry). The brief Translator’s Notes at the end of the volume provide some insight into the types of choices she needed to make in her work, as well as clarifications of a few of the allusions to French literary culture that might not be familiar to English-language readers.

In sum, this is a well-crafted and easy to read translation of a work by a major French writer. Some readers will appreciate the text primarily for its word play and its teasing revelations about the philosophical and coincidental

connections among French philosophers: Did Cixous's mother really buy Walter Benjamin's bed? For others, however, Cixous's narrative voice will resonate with their own experiences of life, love and loss. In either case, Brahic's translation will be a welcome addition to many bookcases.

Amy Baram Reid
New College of Florida

Jean-Michel Rabaté. *1913: The Cradle of Modernism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007. viii + 246 pp.

Through what he terms a "synchronic approach" (3-4), Jean-Michel Rabaté effects a nimble transversal cut of the year 1913 as a historically important threshold period. For Rabaté, this period saw an emerging modernism or a modernism *avant la lettre*, after which "a whole world of references, echoes, and allusions suddenly became as obsolete as corsets and stand-up collars" (216). Rabaté's fascinating look at the year 1913 navigates the complex networks within which were enmeshed various avant-garde movements as well as budding artistic and literary trends (surrealism, imagism, futurism, cubism, primitivism, unanimism, and so on). This contextual study delves into the multifaceted artistic and intellectual collaborations that took place in the year 1913 and brings together music, painting, literature, mathematics, philosophy, political theory and the social sciences in general. Crucial to this volume is the question of how various artists, writers and intellectuals defined the new zeitgeist, "the modern spirit" or "how could one be 'modern' in 1913?" (5). By glossing together various fields of scientific, intellectual and cultural activity in the year 1913, and writers across various ethnic, national and gender frontiers (Fenollosa, Pound, Frobenius, Du Bois, Wharton, Proust), Rabaté gives depth to his analysis of modernism by insisting not only on familiar and not so familiar contextual factors but also on the richness and variety of the forms that modernism took thanks to its internal dynamics and the formal interactions that took place among various conceptual systems within the artistic and scientific worlds. Rabaté consistently makes important connections between the emergence of a new aesthetics and the dramatic and ominous political and military developments (most notably the Balkan wars) which precipitated Europe into World War I. He also explores artistic articulations and manifestations of the modern spirit alongside the emergence of a global culture and a global consciousness.

In the introduction to the book, “Modernism, Crisis, and Early Globalization,” Rabaté presents the year 1913 as a time of change and deep crisis in which “Militarism, imperialism, and nationalism” (10) proved to be the direct cause of the breakout of World War I, but also the emergence of modernist globalization. It is a time that was “giving birth to the world as we know it now” (16). Chapter 1, “The New in the Arts,” explains the structure and directions of his method, which he qualifies as “resolutely transatlantic, comparatist, and multidisciplinary” (18). He proposes to approach modernism within the larger context of a “‘globalized’ world literature” (18). By deftly weaving different stories documenting events from the period under study—events as diverse as the advent of cinema in the United States, the scandal caused in Paris by the premiere of Igor Stravinsky’s *The Rite of Spring*, the influence of ragtime, early jazz, traditional folklore on European composers surrounded by the firmly entrenched conventions of the classical tradition, and the historical opening and spectacular success in New York of the Armory Show (displaying the work of European artists like Matisse, Duchamp, Van Gogh, Cézanne and others)—Rabaté provides a vivid account of the artistic dynamism and fervor that, coupled with an urgent yearning for the “new,” characterized the year 1913. This account brings to the fore the artistic trends that were promoted to push people to think in new ways, such as cinema and painting. In “Chapter 2: Collective Agencies,” Rabaté reviews clashes between various strands of modernism by examining the case of Jules Romain’s “unanimité” (a movement fostering collective identity) and individualism as illustrated by his account of English feminism, Anarchism and Egoism. “Chapter 3: Everyday Life and the New Episteme” and “Chapter 4: Learning to be Modern,” pursue Rabaté’s project of exploring the various ways the “modern spirit” was chronicled by different scientists, philosophers, artists and writers. These chapters shed light on the role of scientific globalization, shifts in the urban landscape, fashion, industrial progress, spirited philosophical debates, aesthetic experimentations and innovations in architecture, in the rise of a new subjectivity, the “new woman,” new mentalities and a new lifestyle. In “Chapter 5: Global Culture and the Invention of the Other,” Rabaté notes that the production and circulation of exotic clichés was a dominant form of engagement with global cultures in 1913, associated with the artists’ desire to invent or discover the “missing Other” (119). His analysis of Frobenius’s often complex and ambivalent writings on the African continent highlights the contributions of this German ethnologist to a new image of Africa as a site of “living cultural organisms” (138), a view that contrasts with Hegel’s view of Africa as being “devoid of history” (134). “Chapter 6: The Splintered Subject of Modernism” and “Chapter 7: At War with Oneself: The Last Cosmopolitan Travels of German and Austrian Modernism” highlight the writings of Du Bois, Pessoa, Kafka, and other emblematic writers of the period, as leading examples of literary portrayals of the “divided subject,” which Rabaté proposes is a prototype of

the modern subject, at war with the world and with itself. In “Chapter 8: Modernism and the End of Nostalgia,” readings of Wharton, Proust and Fournier describe an emerging modernism that is “uncertain, hesitant” (206) in its attempts to express the new “when the old world was still alive and dominated the social game” (200). The book’s conclusion, “Antagonisms,” appropriately reinforces the solid links that existed between culture and history in the lives of key intellectual and artistic figures surveyed in the study.

Rabaté’s synthetic account of a vast array of political, social, philosophical and cultural issues that rose to prominence and acquired an urgent character in 1913, as the world headed toward war, is forceful and engaging. Its comparative take effectively opens up his account of European modernism to the world and usefully tracks its multiple roots and its complicated ramifications in the realm of world politics. The analysis of the tension between nationalist and internationalist ideological trends in 1913, and their aesthetic expressions in the literary and artistic scenes, is insightful and exhibits a great contemporary relevance. The book should be of value to readers interested in early modernism, cultural and feminist studies, as well as postcolonial and global studies.

The study is divided into eight thematically connected and almost seamless chapters, preceded by a general introduction and followed by a brief conclusion. This first edition of *1913: The Cradle of Modernism* provides useful notes organized by chapter, a convenient general index, and eight illustrations including posters, pictures and other visual documents from the period under study.

Safoi Babana-Hampton
Michigan State University